

REMARKS

Claims 20-23 are rejected under 35 USC 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Miur et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2005/0192090 A1 and hereinafter "D1") in view of Uchiyama et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,638,165 A hereinafter "D2") and further in view of Moriyama et al. (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0166417 A1 hereinafter "D3"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action states in the reasons for refusal that the opening 64 of the monitor housing 60 in the cited reference D1 (US2005/0192090A1) (shown in FIG. 8) corresponds to the opening of the light guide plate 39g of the present invention.

The opening 64 of D1 allows the symbols of the reels to be viewed from the front side but corresponds to the opening of the rear holder 39h of the present invention.

Therefore, the light guide plate 39g of the present invention is to be compared with the backlighting arrangement 82 of the LCD monitor 68 of D1. However, the light guide plate 39g of the present invention is provided with an opening whereas the backlighting arrangement 82 of D1 is not.

Thus, the following amendments were made to the claims in order to make the differences between the present invention and D1 clearer.

- The rear holder (corresponding to the monitor housing of D1) provided with an opening is added.
- The illumination part, which illuminates a display window through the openings of the light guide plate and the rear holder, respectively, is added.
- The outside of the display window is illuminated by a part other than the opening of the light guide plate whereas the inside of the display window is illuminated by the illumination part.
- An effect image is displayed on both the outside and inside of the display window.

With a structure of D1, for example, in which the backlighting arrangement (light guide plate) is not provided with an opening, in order to make the symbols viewable through the display window by illumination on the reel surface, it is easily assumed that the symbols are hardly viewed unless the light source for illuminating the reel surface is set brighter than the backlighting arrangement (light guide plate).

However, it is also assumed that there would be a problem such that the effect image displayed on a part other than the display window becomes unclear unless the brightness of the backlighting arrangement is increased.

That is, with a structure of D1 in which the backlighting arrangement (light guide plate) is not provided with an opening, the brightness needs to be adjusted in balance between the light source and the backlighting arrangement (light guide plate). In this case, the light source is used to make the display window to display the symbols on the reel surface and the backlighting arrangement (light guide plate) is used to display clearly the effect image on the LCD monitor. Thus, either of the symbols displayed within the display window of the LCD monitor or the effect image displayed outside the display window could become unclear.

However, according to the present invention, the light guide plate is provided with an opening at a position corresponding to the display window and the illumination part is provided to illuminate the display window though this opening. Thus, the present invention attains an advantageous effect that both the symbols within the display window and the effect image outside the display window can be displayed clearly without the need for adjustment required for D1.

To be more specific, the LCD monitor 68 of D1 is entirely illuminated by the general backlighting arrangement 82 disposed at the rear face, thereby displaying the effect image 53 "Bonus" on the display region of the symbols as shown in FIG. 7.

To display the symbols of the reels on the LCD monitor 68 displaying the effect image 53, the symbols of the reels which dimmed due to transition of the transparent zone 78 of the shutter mechanism 76 is made transparent during backlighting operation while the brightness of the backlighting arrangement 82 is

increased to display the symbols on the LCD monitor 68. Thus, it is assumedly more difficult to view the symbols when they are displayed on the LCD monitor 68.

Further, even in a case where the reel 16 of D1 contains therein a light source for illuminating the symbols from the rear face, it is assumed that a complicated system is required to adjust the brightness of this light source and that of the backlighting arrangement 82 in order to improve viewability of the symbols.

Further, in a case of decreasing the brightness of the backlighting arrangement 82, the luminous intensity of the entire of the LCD monitor 68 is also decreased. Thus, it becomes difficult to display the effect image with the brightness on a part of the LCD monitor other than a symbol-displaying region.

On the other hand, in the gaming machine according to the present invention, the light guide plate, which originally functions as a backlight for guiding light to the entire of the liquid crystal panel, (and the rear holder) is (are) provided with an opening at a position corresponding to the display window of the front display device. Further, the gaming machine is provided with an illumination part (a light source 47, a marginal portion of an opening of light source 40b, etc.) formed at the rear side of the rear holder in order to illuminate the display window through the aforementioned opening(s).

On a part other than the display window, of the front display device, the effect image displayed on the liquid crystal panel is displayed with the use of the light guided by the unopened part of the light guide plate.

Within the display window of the front display device, the effect image displayed on the liquid crystal panel and the symbols variably displayed on the reels are displayed with the use of the illumination part for emitting light through the openings of the light guide panel and the rear holder from the rear side of the rear holder.

The present invention is characterized by the points stated above (see, amended claims).

The reason why an opening is formed in the light guide plate is that the present invention is aimed to illuminate the display window with the light emitted by the illumination part from the rear side of the rear holder, without using (an opening portion of) the light guide plate as an illuminator for the display window. That is, according to the present invention, the illumination part disposed at the rear side of the rear holder serves as a backlight which functions independently of the light guide plate to illuminate the inside of the display window.

Accordingly, formation of the opening in each of the light guide plate and the rear holder at a position corresponding to the display window allows the effect image to be displayed by different illuminators (the illumination part and the light guide plate) inside and outside the display window. At the same time, the present invention produces such an advantageous effect that the symbols of the reels which are illuminated with the light by the illumination part through each of the openings can be displayed within the display window.

As for D1, it is clear from FIG. 8 that the monitor housing 60 having the opening 64 of D1 corresponds to the rear holder 39h having the opening of the present invention.

However, in comparison between the backlighting arrangement 82 of D1 and the light guide plate 39g having an opening of the present invention, the backlighting arrangement 82 of D1 is not designed likewise the present invention in which the backlight (light guide plate) is provided with an opening. Since the gaming machine display of D1 has a liquid crystal shutter 76 disposed at the rear side of the backlighting arrangement 82, in which the liquid crystal shutter 76 enables and disables display of the symbols in accordance with the game condition by electrically switching the state of the transparent zone between a transparent state and an opaque state, the symbols are sometimes not displayed on the LCD monitor. Thus, D1 was made without consideration of the point that an opening (for allowing the symbols to be displayed at all times) is formed in the backlighting arrangement 82, unlike the present invention.

It is clear from the point described above that there is a technical difference between the backlighting arrangement 82 of D1 and the light guide plate 39g of the present invention.

Further, in comparison between the liquid crystal shutter 76 of D1 and the light guide plate 39g of the present invention, the liquid crystal shutter mechanism 76 of D1 sometimes disables display of the symbols by switching the transparent zone to an opaque state. On the other hand, the light guide plate 39g of the present invention has the opening which passes completely through to the other side, so that the symbols are always displayed through this opening. Further, the light guide panel 39g of the present invention functions as the backlight for the liquid crystal panel.

It is clear from this point also that there is a technical difference between the liquid crystal shutter 76 of D1 and the light guide plate 39g of the present invention.

As described above, there is clear difference in constituent requirements between the present invention and D1. Thus, it cannot be assumed that the advantageous effects of the present invention could be achieved by D1.

Cited Reference D2 (US6,638,166) discloses that symbols of mechanical reels are projected and displayed onto a liquid crystal display device configured to display a virtual image.

Cited Reference D3 (US2003/10166417) discloses that diffusion light projected by a projector is converted into parallel light by a Fresnel lens.

D2 and D3 fail to disclose the aforementioned technical characteristics of the present invention. Also, the present invention would not be obvious over D2 and D3 in combination of D1.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention has superiority in the above-described point.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that none of the applied art, alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the features of the claims as amended and discussed above. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in

the art could not combine the features of the applied art to arrive at the claimed invention because the applied art is devoid of all the features of the claimed invention. As a result, it is respectfully submitted that the claims are allowable over the applied art.

Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Support for the amendments to the claims are can be found in the specification as follows:

- Claim 20: the contents of amendment are supported by Paragraphs [0020], [0030], [0032], [0027], [0029], [0038], and [0056].
- Claim 21: the contents of amendment are supported by Paragraph [0027].
- Claim 22: the contents of amendment are supported by Paragraphs [0038], and [0029].
- Claim 23: the contents of amendment are supported by Paragraph [0030].

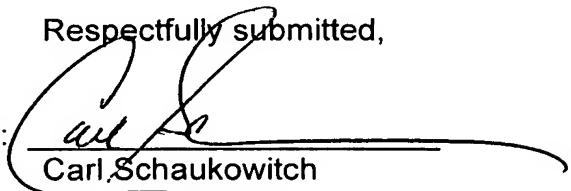
Applicant asserts that there are also reasons other than those set forth above why the pending claims are patentable. Applicant hereby reserves the right to submit those other reasons and to argue for the patentability of claims not explicitly addressed herein in future papers.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the application and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe anything further is desirable in order to place the application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's representative at the telephone number listed below.

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper or if a Petition for Extension of Time is required for timely acceptance of the same,

the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 18-0013 for any such fees and Applicant(s) hereby petition for such extension of time.

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